

PERILOUS TIMES
IN THE
LAST DAYS.

A
SERMON:

BY THE

REV. W. T. McMULLEN,

PREACHED IN KNOX'S CHURCH, WOODSTOCK, ON SABBATH,
13TH JANUARY, 1887.

"SENTINEL" POWER PRESS PRINT, WOODSTOCK.

PERILOUS TIMES

IN THE

LAST DAYS.

**2nd TIMOTHY 3-1.---"This know also, that
in the last days perilous times shall come."**

THERE never was a book written, that furnishes such a vast range of facilities for testing its truthfulness, as the Bible. It foretells the way-marks in the progress of this world's history; so that from generation to generation the proofs and memorials of its foreknowledge, shall never be wanting to the man, who, with intelligent eye, looks abroad upon the occurrences of his times.

Not to speak of the internal and experimental manifestation of itself as the Book of God, which the Bible makes to every believer, there is more than sufficient evidence of an external kind, to convince every candid mind, that the Bible is what it claims to be. The hand-book of explanations, describing some vast panoramic picture, may be proved to be correct or not, by a comparison of the scenes in the picture, as the canvas is unfolded, and the descriptions and statements contained in the book. If you found close and minute correspondence between the descriptions and the actual scenes presented, you would not hesitate to conclude that the author of that book had seen the picture previously, and had written from personal knowledge. In the onward march of Providence in the history of the human race, there is being unfolded a vast panoramic picture. It never was unfolded before; and, therefore, no man could describe it from observation. It is made up of two grand divisions--the first, exhibiting the scenes and occurrences of the history of our race, up till the time of the termination of the Jewish dispensation in the death of Christ; and the second, those of that period commencing at the Cross of Calvary, and extending to the last limit of human history on this earth. For eighteen hundred years this second section of the picture, has been slowly but steadily passing on, before the gaze of the successive generations of mankind. All the great and prominent points of interest were foretold and described centuries previously to their coming into view. Many of these are now past, but many also, by the steady revolutions of time, are drawing near, and will

in due course make their appearance. And as the shifting scene is passing on, it is interesting to glance, now at the anciently written descriptions and predictions in the Bible; and anon, at the actual realities themselves, as they come into view and pass into history. The page of Scripture and the page of Providence illustrate and interpret each other: and to understand either, you must study both. Our text this morning, points our attention to some of the phases and characteristics of the last days, and forewarns us of what may be looked for—"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."

Every thoughtful reader of the New Testament, must have observed the frequency with which this note of warning is sounded. In I Tim. iv. 1. we read—"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith," &c. Again: in II Peter iii. 3. God's people are forewarned "that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.'" These persons are represented as reasoning, from the uniformity of nature, that such a doctrine as that of Christ's coming to judge the world and consign this terrestrial system to universal conflagration, is unreasonable, and out of all keeping with the analogy of natural law. We see the tides of the ocean uniform in their ebbing and flowing—we see day and night, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, following each other with changeless constancy; and it would be a violation of this changeless uniformity, for the world to come to an end, or be burnt up—say these profound reasoners. And if this uniformity proves that no such end of the world is to be looked for, as that which the Bible predicts, pray how did the world come by its beginning? for that must have been a violation of a uniformity of a previous kind also, and of vastly longer duration than that to which philosophic scoffers now point. But the Bible forewarns us that such a philosophy was to make its appearance in the last days, and it has come—a philosophy that sets Nature above Nature's God, who made all her laws, and can at his pleasure, hold any one of them in suspension, for the more striking and conclusive manifestation of Himself to his rational creatures, as in the miracles of our Lord.

Again: Jude in his General Epistle and at the 18th verse, unites with the other inspired writers in testifying that there would be "mockers in the last time."

Further, we are warned in II Timothy iv. 3, that the time would come when, some portions at least of the Christian Church,

would
selves
their e
who gi
most a
Peter.
privily
that bo
rorists
sent H
deny th
"the I
describ
but den
descrip
mental
of mere
who, th
keep up
them.

Now,
expect
days, n
might r
the Chu
in confli
the guis
and und

Such
corrupti
Church,

And n
what res
"perilou
the Bibl
accumul
what it
gle fear
n system
days, are
in Chris
They a
in the Ch
persons o

would "not endure sound doctrine," but would "heap to themselves teachers having itching ears," that they would "turn away their ears from the truth," and be "turned unto fables." Those who give up the truth, generally do accept fables and fancies the most absurd, and without any evidence whatever. Again, in II Peter. II. 1, God's people are forewarned of false teachers, "who, privily, shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," &c. This language evidently points to the errorists who deny the atoning nature of Christ's death; who represent Him as dying a martyr to the doctrines he taught; and who deny that his death was substitutionary. It is in his character as "the Lord who bought them," that they deny Him. Also, Paul describes these false teachers as "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"—language which is strikingly descriptive of these, who deny that there is such a thing as experimental religion, and insist that Christianity is a refining system of mere moral culture, though exquisitely excellent as such; and who, therefore, praise and applaud it and its Great Founder, and keep up its forms, and commend these, as having all the virtue in them.

Now, while in some of the passages quoted, we are warned to expect open Infidel Scoffers outside of the Church, in the last days, in most of them, and in many other passages to which we might refer, we are warned to expect a *Christianized Infidelity in the Church*, in the last times—an infidelity not facing her honestly in conflict, but in sneaking concealment within her pale, wearing the guise of piety in order to bring in privily "damnable heresies," and undermine the truth.

Such is an outline of the descriptions given in Scripture, of the corruptions which were to display their hideous forms within the Church, in the perilous times of the last days.

And now it may be important to inquire, more particularly, in what respects the Scriptures represent that such times would be "perilous." Is it to Christianity as a system of doctrine? Is the Bible liable to such objections and difficulties that these might accumulate to such an extent, as to overwhelm its claims to be what it professes? Certainly not. The Bible never hints a single fear anywhere, as to whether it shall maintain its ground as a system of infallible truth. The "perilous times" of the last days, are not perilous because of any weakness in the Bible, or in Christianity.

They are represented rather as perilous to that class of persons in the Church, who are not thoroughly established in the faith—persons of superficial religious knowledge—weak-minded persons

easily unsettled and led astray. The false teachers of the "perilous times," and their victims too, are described by the Apostle in the 8th verse, where he says—"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins,"—persons "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." These errorists "creep into houses"—invade the sanctities and secreties of the family circle, and "lead captive silly women." And are not the Apostle's words finding most striking fulfilment in the weak-minded, silly, sentimental young ladies of the Episcopalian Church in England, who, if we are to believe the most reliable journals and newspapers in Britain, have actually allowed themselves to be made pliant tools in the hands of Puseyite ministers, who are Romanizing the English Church as rapidly as they can; and have recently taken the further step of introducing, in a covert and plausible manner, the worst of all Rome's abominations—I mean the confessional?

"Silly women" have led the way and set the example of confessing to Puseyite ministers, who to all intents and purposes are Romish Priests; and who show that they understand just as well, how to "creep into houses, and lead captive silly women."

Not only are such times described as being perilous to the weak-minded and silly, it is also asserted that the teachers of such error, shall bring upon themselves "swift destruction."

And further, such times are perilous to the Church as an organization. The visible Church is liable at any time to become infected with heresy. Her light may become obscured, and the most essential doctrines of salvation may be so darkened, explained away, or mingled up with certain counteracting errors, that the best means of restoring light to the world, and, at the same time, of punishing a faithless Church, is for God in his Providence to rend her to pieces, take the best material in her, out of her, and form it into a new organization. Such has been His course in times past. Disruptions and reformations mark the Church's history. When the witnesses for truth within her, have argued, and agitated, and done their utmost, they can but leave her, like men taking to the boats from a sinking ship. God's voice to them is, "Come out of her, my people."

And is not this call of mercy and warning very loudly addressed at the present time to the evangelical party in the Church of England? Melancholy it would be, no doubt, to see Romish Puseyism left as the established representative of England's Protestantism, and the truly Protestant Party cast over board. But do the Evangelicals suppose that they can drive out the Puseyites? They can drive out neither Puseyite nor infidel. For a long time a large

class, even of those belonging to other Christian denominations, in Britain, were satisfied that the Episcopal Church should enjoy in peace her vast endowments, because they believed her sound in the cause of Protestantism, a mighty breastwork against the encroachments of Popery, and the invasions of Infidelity. She has now most emphatically ceased to be a breastwork against either the one or the other. From many of her pulpits most of the distinctive tenets of Rome, are preached from Sabbath to Sabbath. And, as regards the forms of her worship, she is making rapid progress in the use of lighted candles at her services in broad day, light, altar cloths and priestly vestments with inscriptions and emblems in curious needle-work, that not only ape, but almost equal the religious millinery of Her who figures in the book of Revelation, in "fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls." And now, with her confessional, pray where is her protestantism?

And as regards Infidelity, its most polished and envenomed shafts, in modern times, come from behind her ramparts! This is the Church that unchurches all other Churches—that refuses to recognize them as anything but religious societies, whose baptisms and sacramental tables are without authority or validity; because the ministers who officiate, are outside of that Popish figment of an "apostolic succession," and, therefore, not scripturally ordained.

If "apostolic succession," in the sense of the Church of England, were worth contending about, we can prove we have it as well as they; for John Knox was admitted to Priest's orders in the Church of Rome. In like manner can the Methodists claim it through John Wesley; and other Protestant denominations can make good their claims too. But we take far higher ground, and hold, that the true succession is, that which is Apostolic in doctrine, Apostolic in discipline, and Apostolic in practice. Let those then who cling to this figment more ardently than they do to the Cross of Christ, unchurch us if they will. The same thing was done by their great predecessors, to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Evangelist, Luke, tells us in the beginning of the 20th chapter, how as Jesus "taught the people and preached the Gospel," haughty Phariseeism, strutting in its robes of office, came to him in the person of the chief priests and scribes, and called in question the *authority* and *validity* of his official acts, asking—"By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?" Whether souls were perishing by thousands and millions or not, was not the question; but "authority," *true secession in office*, was the question with these self-com-

placent ecclesiastics. To be unchurched as we are, only identifies us all the more closely with the Church's Saviour and Head; whom the Pharisees of former times refused to recognize as in the true succession. They unchurched themselves by such procedure; and clinging to the symbols and shadows of spiritual authority, they lost the reality itself, and were left without a church or an altar. And the Rome ward infatuation of a large portion of the English Church at the present time, seems to point to a similar doom, so far as all that constitutes a Church is concerned. All the more mysterious does it seem, when we consider that the Papacy is beginning to totter to its fall. But if their theory of the "apostolic succession" is correct, it is obvious that it is in Rome they ought to be, for, confessedly, by her they have it. And there is nothing more certain than that the tendency of the doctrine is, to draw back to Rome all who hold it. Sad it is to see a leprosy so incurable seizing on England's Protestant establishment,—the church whose official representative administers the coronation oath to Britain's Kings and Queens; and who swears them to hold and defend the Protestant faith! But this alarming degeneracy is only another confirmation of the Bible, which foretells that in the last days "perilous times" should come; and that some of the church's teachers should depart from the faith, and "privily bring in damnable heresies."

Were they honest men, as the evangelical party tell them, they would leave the church; but they stay in, in order to "bring in" the species of teaching which Paul describes. This movement, however, will, no doubt, result in bringing about the fulfilment of purposes and designs in the providence of Him who can bring good out of evil; and deplorable as such degeneracy is, yet it may fulfil and confirm those Scripture predictions, which warn the people of God that such departures from the faith, were to take place in the last times. And it appears to me that there is a prediction, in the Book of Revelation, of this special movement, and a strikingly graphic description of it. In the 13th chapter we are informed that when the Popish Ecclesiastical System begins to experience its death wounds, and to totter in weakness, another and milder form of the Old Apostacy is to spring up, and impart new life to the dying image of the old. In the first part of the chapter we have a description of the "Beast," of such monster make—part Bear, part Leopard, and part Lion—having seven heads and ten horns. By almost universal consent Protestant expositors regard this "beast" as representing that apostate church, that has deluged the earth with the blood of the saints. But we are told that this "beast" is to be succeeded by another, very dif-

ferent in appearance, mild and lamb like in form, but, in reality, "exercising all the power of the first beast," which "had a wound by a sword and did live."

Read from the 11th verse,— "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns, like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him; and causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak," &c.

The first beast rose up out of the "sea," which is the emblem of tumult, corruption, and anarchy. The second, lamb like beast, is said to rise out of the "earth," which is significant, on the contrary, of consolidated, organized, and cultivated human society. And it is when the first beast was wounded by a sword,—as the Papal System has recently been,—that the second beast comes to preserve and perpetuate his *image*, and make it venerable. It behoves us to speak with great humility and caution, on the interpretation of prophecy not actually, out and out, fulfilled; and all the more would I speak with caution here, because no commentator on the passage gives such an interpretation of it. Some regard the first beast as Rome, Pagan; and the second beast as Rome, Papal; and other interpreters make the first beast represent the secular power of the Papacy; and the second, the spiritual power.

The aptness of the application of the passage to the present Romanizing movement, in the Church of England, must strike every one. Such an interpretation could not have been thought of, when any of our commentaries were written; and, therefore, it is not wonderful that there should be, as Barnes says, "almost as many opinions as there have been interpreters." No theory ever put forward on this passage, has been felt to be free of difficulty; nor do I consider the interpretation now given, altogether free of difficulty either. The objections to it may possibly disappear, as the course of events move on. Up to the present point, it fits into the actual facts very remarkably. Lamb like, indeed, Puseyism puts on the guise of piety, and the appearance of innocence; but, when arrested on suspicion by public opinion, and

examined, it utters its defence, not with the voice that proves it a lamb, but with the *dragon voice* of its great Predecessor.

This alarming degeneracy in the Protestant National Establishment of England, bodes ill for Britain. Implicated as she has been in the guilt of supporting and encouraging an apostate church, by vast sums of money annually from her treasury, it may be the design of Providence to send retribution on her, by her own Protestant Establishment becoming infected with the leprosy of a system, which, as a nation, she has abjured, and yet, inconsistently, supported. Has any nation ever yet escaped, that gave aid and comfort to Popery? Three hundred years ago, Spain was in "the zenith of her glory," and looked proudly down upon the other Powers of Europe. She made herself the friend and ally of Popery, and what has been her fate? Stripped of all her glory, and hemmed into narrower and still narrower limits, she has sunk into weakness, degeneracy, and distress,—"and the end is not yet." Austria, long the back-bone of the Papacy, is broken and lies prostrate in weakness at the feet of Protestant Prussia, an infant in years, compared with other European nations, but bidding fair to be soon a giant. And it is only according to the analogy of what other nations have experienced, that Britain should have to face a reckoning at the bar of him who declares—"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." So it fared with the United States and slavery. God grant that Britain may escape, and that the British throne, and British Protestantism, and her Protestant Institutions, be not undermined by a Romanized Episcopacy, that administers the coronation oath to Britain's kings and queens, swearing them to Protestantism, and that conducts its worship in so many of its churches, with lighted candles, in broad day-light; sets up the confessional, and even makes overtures to Rome for a union! A tremendous responsibility rests upon the Evangelical party in that church, at the present time. May they be wisely guided! Had they the appliances by which to discipline and drive out the errorists, and save the church, they have the heart to do it: but they are powerless. The constitution of their church furnishes no facilities for this purpose; but leaves them to feel the degradation of contact with what they can neither tolerate nor remove.

In conclusion, brethren, all these things are just "so many confirmations of the Bible, as the Book of God; for it declares, that "in the last days perilous times shall come"—times when the people of God must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Amen.

voice that proves it
Predecessor.

National Establish-
ment as she has
engaged an apostate
her treasury, it may
be on her, by her
and with the leprosy
of, and yet, incon-
sistently, that gave
years ago, Spain
proudly down upon
of the friend and
Stripped of all
narrower limits,
press,—“and the
the Papacy, is
set of Protestant
European na-
tional is only accord-
experienced, that
war of him who
thee, and thy
with the United
escape, and that
her Protestant
Episcopacy, that
kings and queens,
its worship in
broad day-light;
to Rome for
the Evangelical
they be wisely
discipline and
have the heart
of their
leaves them to
neither toler-

so many con-
fessionaries, that
is when the
once deliver